

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of automatically indexing a document comprising:  
feeding a plurality of untabbed sheets in the sheet path of a sheet  
handling device;  
5 identifying selected ones of the sheets based upon a predefined criteria;  
and  
automatically appending a tab to the identified sheets.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sheet handling device is a printer or  
photocopier.
- 10 3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the sheet path comprises the output  
receptacle of the sheet handling device.
4. The method of Claim 1, wherein automatically appending is performed  
by a tab appending device controlled by a computing device.
- 15 5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the computing device is in  
communication with a central processing unit of a computer that hosts text editing  
software, or with a printing device, or a bar code reading device.
6. The method of Claim 1, further comprising identifying a location on the  
selected sheet where the tab is to be appended.
- 20 7. The method of Claim 6, wherein the location of the tab is determined by  
software after an analysis of the electronic version of the document.
8. The method of Claim 6, wherein a user specifies the location of the tab  
using a software interface.
9. The method of Claim 1, further comprising recording indicia on the tab  
to be appended to the selected sheet.
- 25 10. The method of Claim 1, wherein one of the predefined criteria is a page  
number.
11. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:  
identifying a location for appending the tab to the identified sheet; and  
printing indicia on the tab.
- 30 12. A method of automatically indexing a document comprising:

feeding a plurality of untabbed sheets in the sheet path of a printing device;

identifying selected ones of the sheets based upon a predefined criteria;

automatically identifying locations for appending tabs to the identified selected sheets;

printing indicia on the tab, wherein the indicia is electronically stored; and

appending the tab to the identified selected sheets.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the printing device is a printer or a photocopier.

14. The method of Claim 12, wherein the sheet path of the printing device comprises the output receptacle of the printing device.

15. The method of Claim 12, wherein identifying selected ones of the sheets is performed by a computing device, wherein the computing device is in communication with a central processing unit of a computer that hosts text editing software, or with a printer or photocopier, or with a bar code reading device.

16. The method of Claim 12, wherein identifying the location for appending the tab is determined by software analysis of the electronic version of the document.

17. The method of Claim 12, wherein the indicia is generated with a software interface configured to allow a user to define or modify at least one characteristic of the indicia.

18. The method of Claim 12, wherein one of the predefined criteria is a page number.

19. An apparatus for automatically indexing a document comprising:  
a sheet handling device having a sheet path, wherein the document is fed through the sheet path;

a computing device for identifying selected ones of the sheets in the sheet path;

a sheet sensor in communication with the computing device; and

a tab appending mechanism, controlled by the computing device, for appending a tab to the selected sheet.

20. The apparatus of Claim 19, wherein the computing device receives instructions from an external computing device having text editing capabilities, or from a printer or photocopier, or from a bar code reading device.

5 21. The apparatus of Claim 19, wherein the tab appending mechanism comprises a tab dispensing mechanism controlled by the computing device.

22. The apparatus of Claim 21, wherein the tab dispensing mechanism comprises a roll of pre-cut tabs attached to a backing tape.

23. The apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising a device for recording indicia on the tab to be dispensed.

10 24. The apparatus of Claim 23, wherein the device for recording indicia comprises a print head and an ink source.

25. The apparatus of Claim 24, wherein the print head is selected from the group comprising: a laser printing device, an ink-jet printing device, a thermal resistive transfer printing device, and an impact printing device.

15 26. The apparatus of Claim 24, wherein the apparatus is integrated with the sheet handling components of a printing device.

27. The apparatus of Claim 26, wherein the printing device may be selected from the group comprising: a printer, a photocopier, and a typewriter.

20 28. The apparatus of Claim 24, wherein the apparatus is configured for use as an external accessory for use with a printing device.

29. The apparatus of Claim 24, wherein the apparatus is configured for use with the manual feeding of sheets.

30. The apparatus of Claim 24, wherein the computing device receives an indication of the location for appending the tab on the selected sheets.

25 31. The apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the indication is provided by a user utilizing a software interface.

32. The apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the indication is provided by software analysis of an electronic version of the document.

30 33. The apparatus of Claim 24, wherein a user utilizes software configured to allow creation and modification of the indicia.

34. An apparatus for automatically indexing a document comprising:

a printing device having a sheet path for delivering a document having printed, untabbed sheets;

a sheet sensor for detecting sheets in the sheet path of the printing device;

5 a computing device, in communication with the sheet sensor, identifying selected ones of the printed, untabbed sheets;

a tab dispensing device, controlled by the computing device, for appending tabs to the identified selected sheets; and

10 a print head, controlled by the computing device and cooperating with the tab dispensing device, for recording indicia on the tabs.

35. An apparatus for automatically indexing a document comprising:

a printing device;

means for detecting sheets in the output path of the printing device;

15 means for identifying selected ones of the sheets for receiving a tab, wherein the identifying means communicates electronically with the detecting means;

means for indicating locations where the tabs are to be appended to the selected sheets, and for creating and editing indicia to be recorded on the tabs;

20 means for generating and communicating the location and indicia of the tabs to the selecting means;

means for recording the indicia on the tabs, wherein the selecting means controls the recording means; and

means for appending the tabs to the selected sheets, wherein the selecting means controls the appending means.